

Rangeland Management Workforce Training Program

Situation

Rangeland management professionals work in a field with rapidly changing ecological understanding and advancing technologies. Yet, for early and mid-career range management professionals there is a lack of adequate access to educational opportunities for career development and advancement, continuing education credits, and certification as professionals or consultants. Range Management curricula taught by universities are focused on conferring college degrees to new professionals entering the workforce and as such are not specifically suitable for mid-career development. Moreover, while the Society for Range Management (SRM) maintains two certification programs (Certified Professional in Range Management and [CPRM] Certified Range Management Consultant [CRMC]), there is no formal curriculum to prepare applicants for the certification exams, nor are there structured courses or training options for continuing education credits once certification is obtained. Therefore, there is a critical need for development of training modules focused on the principles and practices of rangeland ecology and management to benefit individuals seeking career development and advancement opportunities, continuing education credits, and certification as professionals or consultants in range management. Likewise, federal and state land management agencies would benefit from enhanced educational opportunities for their workforce of rangeland professionals. Development of effective training modules will ensure certified professionals and consultants are applying cutting edge rangeland management techniques that are grounded in the most recent science, improving ecological, economic, and social outcomes on America's rangelands.

This project will leverage the Rangelands Partnership's network of rangeland professionals to coordinate and develop training modules in rangeland ecology and management principles. These training modules will support early and mid-career range professionals in career development and advancement, continuing education credits, and certification in the SRM CPRM and CRMC. The training modules will utilize an array of technologies to deliver cutting edge, on-demand content and assessments via an online portal administered by the Rangelands Partnership through the Rangelands Gateway.

Objectives:

- 1) Coordinate and collaborate with SRM, federal land management agencies, and university professors to evaluate and define key educational needs for the existing rangeland ecology and management workforce.
- 2) Survey active rangeland professionals regarding knowledge gaps and training needed for career development/advancement, continuing education, and certification for CPRM or CRMC.
- 3) Develop workforce training modules in rangeland ecology and management using a computer-based learning management system as a component of the Rangelands Gateway of the Rangelands Partnership.
- 4) Build training assessment and evaluation tools that measure learner engagement and learning outcomes necessary for accreditation or certification.
- 5) Design an online framework/platform to administer and manage the "Range Management Workforce Training System."

Proposal RFA: Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program – Education and Workforce Development Program

Program Area/Code: Agricultural Workforce Training Grants – A7060

Grant period, funding level, and proposal due date: Five years, \$500,000, September 24, 2020.